

Message Text

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S E C R E T MADRID 1578

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARTMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJ: KING'S VIEWS ON POLITICAL SITUATION

1. DURING MY CALL ON THE KING AFTERNOON FEBRUARY 28 ON OTHER MATTERS, HE ASKED HOW I THOUGHT PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION LOOKED AND WHETHER REFORM TEMPO SEEMED RIGHT.

2. I REPLIED THAT GIVEN THE FACT THAT SAPIN WAS JUST BEGINNING TO WAKE UP FROM A PERIOD OF A 39-YEAR PERSONAL RULE BY FRANCO, I THOUGHT THE SITUATION LOOKED QUITE GOOD. IT WAS NOT SURPRISING THAT THERE WERE DEMONSTRATIONS AND A DEGREE OF POLITICAL IMPATIENCE AND I EXPECTED THAT THIS WOULD CONTINUE. AT THE SAME TIME, I BELIEVED THAT THE REFORM TEMPO SEEMED ABOUT RIGHT, PROVIDED THAT THERE WAS SUSTAINED PROGRESS. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO ANNOUNCE CERTAIN PROGRAMS AND THEN LET TOO MUCH TIME ELAPSE BEFORE THERE ARE VISIBLE SIGNS OF PROGRESS. AFTER CONGRATULATING THE KING FOR THE GREAT SUCCESS OF HIS BARCELONA TRIP AND SUGGESTING THE DESIRABILITY OF SIMILAR TRIPS IN OTHER PARTS OF SPAIN, I ASKED THE KING FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.

3. COMMENTING FIRST ON THE BARCELONA TRIP, THE KING SAID HE HAD BEEN VERY PLEASED BY HIS RECEPTION, PARTICULARLY BY THE PRESENCE OF SO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VARIOUS PLACES HE HAD VISITED. EVEN THOUGH PRIME MINISTER ARIAS HAD REPROACHED

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HIM FOR HAVING COME SO CLOSE SO OFTEN TO THE "HORNS OF THE BULL"

IN PLUNGING INTO CROWDS, HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO IDENTIFY WITH THE SPANISH PEOPLE AT THIS TIME. HE PLANNED OTHER TRIPS IN THE FUTURE AND THOUGHT THAT ON AN IMPORTANT ONE, SUCH AS A VISIT TO THE BASQUE COUNTRY, HE WOULD EXTEND INVITATIONS TO PROMINENT FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS (HE MENTIONED PEOPLE LIKE SY SULZUBGER) TO ACCOMPANY HIM.

4. THE KING SAID THAT THERE WERE CONTINUING PROBLEMS FROM THE RIGHT OVER THE REFORM PROGRAM. GIRON, HE HAD BEEN TOLD, HAD BEEN THREATENING TO RESIGN ALL HIS PRESENT POSTS IN PROTEST OVER THE REFORM PROGRAM. HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER GIRON WOULD GO THROUGH WITH THIS. HE HAD ALSO BEEN TOLD THAT THE MARQUES DE VILLAVERDE (FRANCO'S SON-IN-LAW) WANTED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE MOVEMENT FROM THE PROVINCE OF JAEN. THE KING THOUGHT THIS WAS A VERY BAD IDEA SINCE VILLAVERDE WOULD ONLY SERVE AS A RALLYING POINT FOR THE NOSTALGICS AND WOULD BE A POTENTIAL OBSTACLE. HE MADE CLEAR HE WAS COMPLETELY OPPOSED TO THE IDEA, BUT HE SEEMED UNCERTAIN AS TO HOW THIS COULD BE BLOCKED.

5. WITH REGARD TO FRAGA, THE KING SAID HE WAS MUCH MORE RELAXED ABOUT HIM THAT HE HAD BEEN AT THE OUTSET. HE FEARED THAT FRAGA MIGHT NOT BE WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE MONARCHY. HOWEVER, HE WAS NOW CONVINCED OTHERWISE AND HE BELIEVED HE HAD EXCELLENT WORKING RELATIONS WITH FRAGA AND THAT FRAGA SUPPORTED THE MONARCHY. THE KING SAID HE HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY PLEASED BY FRAGA'S TELEVISION INTERVIEW LAST FRIDAY EVENING AND THAT HE HAD TELEPHONED HIM PERSONALLY TO CONGRATULATE HIM.

6. WITH REGARD TO ARIAS, HE HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPLAINED TO ME WHY HE HAD TO KEEP HIM. BASICALLY, THIS HAD NOT BEEN A BAD DECISION, BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THAT ARIAS WAS VERY INDECISIVE, NOW LEANING ONE WAY, NOW ANOTHER. HE WAS NOT A LEADER AND HIS INDECISIVENESS HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE OVERALL TEMPO OF THE REFORM PROGRAM.

7. THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS THAT OF FINANCE MINISTER VILLAR MIR WHOSE ACTIONS HAVE CAUSED PROBLEMS WITH THE OTHER MINISTERS AND WHOSE DELAYS IN GETTING AN ECONOMIC SECRET

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PROGRAM UNDER WAY HAVE BEEN HARMFUL. HE BELIEVED THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS A CRUCIAL ONE IN SPAIN TODAY AND VERY MUCH HOPED THAT BY THE TIME OF THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER, THERE WOULD BE A TURN-AROUND. THE KING SAID HE HOPED THE US WOULD DO WHATEVER IT COULD TO BE HELPFUL IN THIS RESPECT. (WE HAVE HEARD MANY REPORTS THAT FINANCE MINISTER VILLAR MIR IS IN TROUBLE, BUT THE KING GAVE NO INDICATION THAT THERE WAS ANY THOUGHT OF DROPPING VILLAR MIR AT THIS TIME.)

8. WITH REGARD TO THE ARMY, THE KING SAID THE MAIN PROBLEM WAS ONE OF GENERATION GAP. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SOME OF THE SENIOR ARMY PEOPLE WERE NERVOUS ABOUT CHANGE AND THE TEMPO OF CHANGE, BUT HE DID NOT ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS HAD TRIED TO PUT A REIN ON FRAGA. HE SAID THAT ALL THE YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS OF HIS GENERATION WERE IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM AND HE SEEMED TO BE SOMEWHAT CONCERNED ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE OF VIEW BETWEEN GENERATIONS THAT SEEMS TO BE DEEPENING.

9. THE KING EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT WHILE THE OPPOSITION AND CLANDESTINE POLITICAL GROUPS SEEMED TO BE MAKING PROGRESS IN ORGANIZING THEMSELVES, THIS COULD NOT BE SAID ABOUT GROUPS OPERATING FROM WITHIN THE SYSTEM. WHEN I POINTED OUT THAT FRAGA'S GROUP, DEMOCRATIC REFORM, AND THE DEMOCRATIC UNION OF SILVA MUNOZ SEEMED TO BE MAKING PROGRESS, THE KING'S ONLY COMMENT WAS THAT THERE ARE PERHAPS TOO MANY POLITICAL GROUPS TRYING TO OCCUPY SPACE IN THE CENTER. THE KING WAS QUITE CRITICAL OF RUIZ JIMENEZ IN ASSOCIATING WITH PCE LEADER, SANTIAGO CARILLO, IN ROME AND IN DEMANDING THAT HE BE TRIED FOR HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE MADRID UNIVERSITY GATHERING, FOR WHICH COMMUNIST LEADER SANCHEZ MONTERO HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND SENTENCED. I TOLD THE KING THAT I HAVE ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS MADE IT KNOWN TO RUIZ JIMENEZ THAT WE THOUGHT HE WAS MAKING A GREAT MISTAKE IN MAINTAINING THE POSITION THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY SHOULD BE LEGALIZED.

10. FINALLY, THE KING SAID HE THOUGHT THAT THE SITUATION IN SPAIN TODAY WAS INFINITELY BETTER THAN HE WOULD HAVE DARED TO HOPE SOME MONTHS AGO. THERE WAS MUCH TO BE DONE, BUT HE BELIEVED THE GOVERNMENT WAS ON THE RIGHT TRACK AND HE GAVE ME TO UNDERSTAND THAT HE FULLY SUPPORTED THE REFORM PROGRAM AS
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IT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY FRAGA.
STABLER

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